

# PLAIN TALKS

October 1986





# CONTENTS

Volume 65

Number 8

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Software tracks progress                    | 4  |
| News briefs                                 | 5  |
| GSU makes a difference                      | 6  |
| Wielgus explores marketing strategies       | 7  |
| Job offers variety                          | 8  |
| Sideliners gather at Lakeshore              | 9  |
| "Everybody takes care of everybody else"    | 10 |
| Nelson Coal Energy Center educates visitors | 12 |
| Street seeks creativity                     | 13 |
| Speaking up for GSU                         | 14 |
| Retiree update                              | 16 |
| Inside GSU                                  | 17 |
| Making GSU work                             | 18 |
| Article highlights utility ills             | 19 |

## PLAIN TALKS

October 1986

Published for employees and retirees of Gulf States Utilities Company. No portion of the contents of this magazine may be reproduced without written permission of the publisher. Address all communications to PLAIN TALKS, Gulf States Utilities Company, P. O. Box 2951, Beaumont, Texas 77704, Phone (409) 838-6631.

**Executive Editor:**  
Betty Gavora

**Editor:**  
Susan Huff Gilley

**Correspondents:**  
Robert Adams  
Vickie Albert  
Ronnie Bordelon  
Barbara Broussard  
Mamie Burrell  
Debra Cassel  
Myra Castello  
Laurie Cobbs  
Cheryl Crawford  
Lisa Creekbaum  
Betty Dickschat  
Betty Dowell  
Andy Dreher  
Bonnie Duval  
Ella B. Fairley  
Donna Fancher  
Charlotte Gautreau  
Rhonda Haskins  
Connie Herford  
Tina Hunt  
Les Jones  
Lynda Kapalski  
Helen Kennedy  
Clint Lilley  
Audrey McDonald  
Clint Moss  
Sherry Overbeck  
Debra Patin  
Edith Patterson  
Carol Payne  
Myra Ponthier  
Casey Richert  
Mike Rodgers  
Greg Russell  
D.W. Rutherford  
Jeral Semien  
Sue Simon  
Monica Thomas  
David Thornhill  
Jean Tinsley  
Delores West  
Robby Zeringue

Employees who change residences or offices should fill out company mailing-address-change forms (GSU0012-00-81) and return them to the mailroom in the Edison Plaza. GSU publications, departmental mailings and other company information are not automatically forwarded; addresses must be corrected when employees move.



## Energy checkup

Gulf States Utilities  
Port Arthur, Texas

To whomever it may concern:

I'm writing to express my gratitude to your company's Marketing and Consumer Services Department.

I recently requested a home energy check. Sue Simon arrived promptly at the designated time and proceeded with a very efficient, comprehensive evaluation of home and appliances, following which she outlined some conservation methods and ideas.

I found the energy check and information provided by Ms. Simon interesting and informative. I will comply with recommendations in the very near future.

Thanks for this very valuable service rendered by a friendly, informed consultant.

Sincerely,  
Ruth E. Davis

**Editor's note:** Sue Simon is an energy auditor in Port Arthur.

## Radio watch

Arden Loughmiller  
Gulf States Utilities  
Beaumont, Texas

Dear Mr. Loughmiller:

The completion of the first year of our joint effort to serve our community with the Neighborhood Radio Watch Program causes me to reflect upon the great job that you and your employees have done in keeping us advised of situations requiring police service.

Even though the program was begun here as an untried concept, it is now my feeling that other areas could derive tremendous benefit by implementing their own Neighborhood Radio Watch programs, and I would encourage them to participate.

Thank you very much for your continued interest and assistance.

Sincerely,  
John K. Swan  
Chief of Police

## Quick results

Terry Huval  
Gulf States Utilities  
Lafayette, La.

Dear Mr. Huval:

I contacted your office on July 11 with a line noise problem and spoke with Mr. Rozas. We discussed the problem in detail and in one-half hour, Mr. Rozas came to my house in Cade to assess the problem firsthand. He returned Monday, July 14 to conduct a few tests and at that time, he recommended a plan of action. He took the time to explain what he found and what he was going to do. The next day, your line crew came promptly on time, did the required work in short time and with minimal inconvenience to me and my family. The next day the cleanup crew arrived and cleaned the yard as promised.

To say that I was impressed with this type of service is an understatement. In these times of quick service — many times with poor results — it is indeed a pleasure to find professionals like Mr. Rozas and your line crew. Many thanks for a job well done in record time.

Sincerely,  
Roy J. Bonvillian Jr.

**Editor's note:** Danny Rozas is a communications foreman in Lafayette, while Terry Huval is assistant substation supervisor.

## Plant tour

James E. Moss  
Gulf States Utilities  
Baton Rouge, La.

Dear Mr. Moss:

The Capital Area Ground Water Conservation Commission wishes to express appreciation to you and your staff for the hospitality shown the commissioners, staff and visitors during our visit to the River Bend plant on April 21. The staff provided facilities for our board meeting and conducted an interesting tour of your training center and facility, which were enjoyed by all of our group.

We especially appreciate the cooperation of Mark Walton, a former commissioner and chairman of our board, who addressed our group on your use of ground water; Lydia Broussard, who made our tour and stay in general enjoyable; and Shivaun Tessier, who made arrangements for the visit.

The commission also appreciates the efforts of current commission member Carl Courtney of GSU's Louisiana Station for his efforts in arranging the River Bend visit and for providing group transportation.

Sincerely yours,  
George T. Cardwell  
Commission Director

## THE COVER

Visitors to the Nelson Coal Energy Center can learn all they ever wanted to know about coal and other energy sources.

Margaret Monk Harris, consumer information coordinator, guides youngsters and adults through the center and sometimes onto the plant grounds.

Meet Harris, pictured on the front cover, in the story on page 12.

The cover photography is by Susan Gilley of Employee Communications.



# Software tracks progress

by Mike Rodgers

"...I have promises to keep..." is a famous line penned by poet Robert Frost. Like the poet, GSU has promises to keep, but there the similarity ends. GSU uses computers to keep track of the promises made for River Bend. These promises are actually commitments made to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Simply put, a commitment is a documented obligation to the NRC that outlines what we will do and when we will do it. The NRC views commitments as the

way Gulf States plans to meet its regulations. Whenever the company commits to something, the NRC expects it to be carried out. "For instance," says Les England, supervisor-nuclear licensing, "let's say we made a commitment about relief valves at the plant. We have to know when the commitment was made, what it was, when it was to be done and a host of other things to assure its implementation and subsequent closure with the NRC." He notes that verification

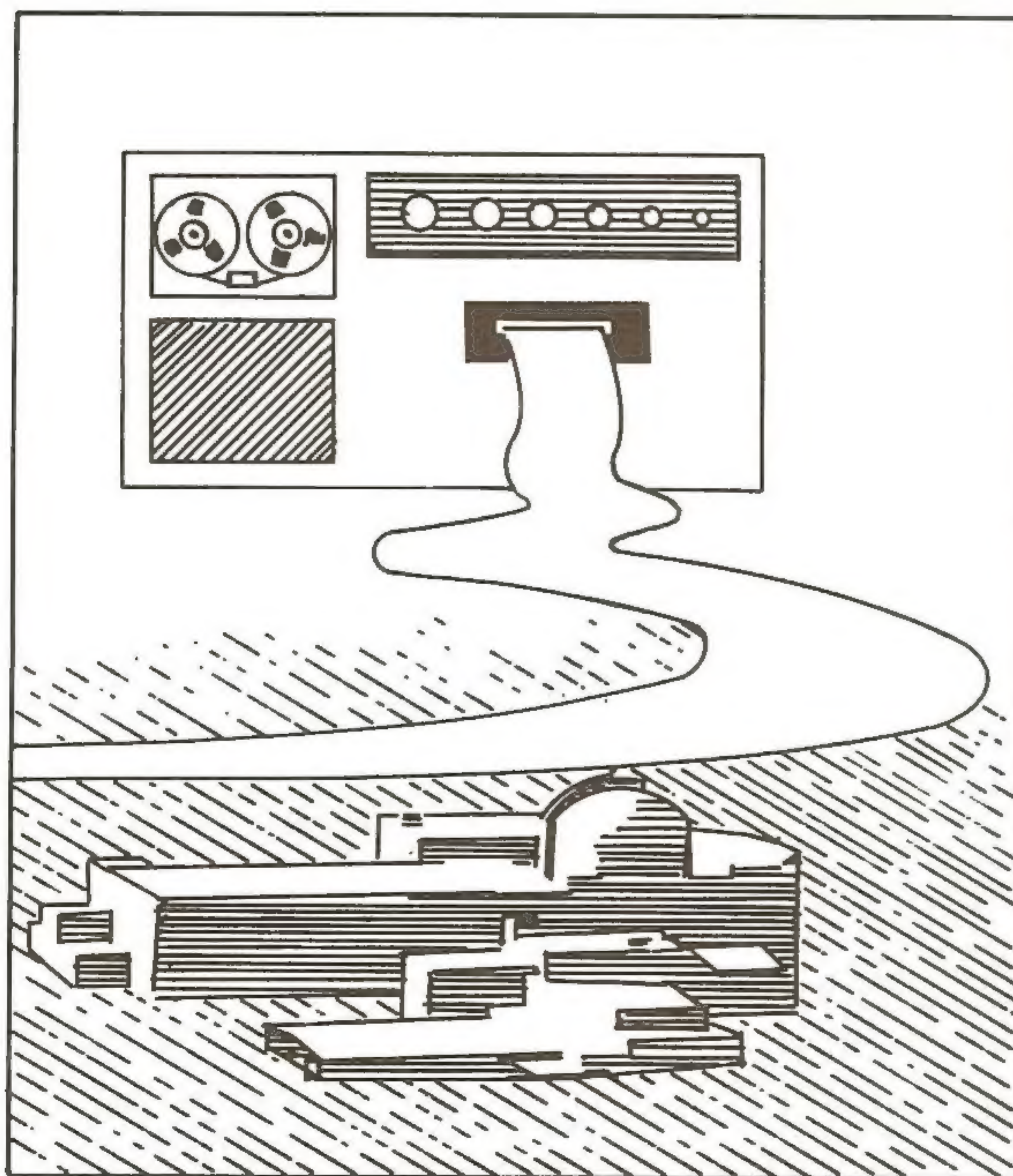
is also important to the NRC. "Basically, when we say we've met an obligation, the commission wants us to be able to prove it. That's where we involve Quality Assurance personnel."

To accomplish all this, Gulf States developed commitment tracking, a program using computers to make sure we keep our promises. The company used its IBM system and software for its speed and wide availability for anyone to access and determine the status of commitments. "It's very important for a utility, especially one with a nuclear plant, to keep on top of its commitments. By doing this, we aim to avoid the violations and fines which can be imposed for failure to meet these promises," points out England. GSU also wanted to oversee a management tool to be used by both the responsible departments and management to assist in meeting commitments.

At the urging of GSU, an organization called the Commitment Tracking Utility Group (CTUG) was formed by several utilities to exchange information, discuss problems and assist each other with commitment tracking. Initially, CTUG involved GSU, Louisiana Power and Light, Houston Lighting and Power and Florida Power and Light. Interest in the group has grown considerably since the first informal meeting of several utilities in late 1984. GSU hosted the most recent CTUG meeting in July; a session that brought together 45 people from 15 utilities and the Department of Energy.

"They were very interested in our computer-based program for tracking commitments, especially since we were among the leading utilities doing something of this nature," England says enthusiastically. As an example, he states that GSU can ask the computer to search for any individual word or words and receive a computer

## *Commitment tracking*





listing of all commitments using those words. More typical programs can only search for predetermined "key words."

With the end of the construction phase of River Bend, the nature of the commitments has changed. Now that the plant is operational, most of the commitments come from reportable events or responses made to the NRC.

Some of the utilities doing com-

mitment tracking now were forced into it by the NRC after receiving violations or fines. According to England, GSU was not one of those utilities. "We put our program into effect to avoid that and to give upper management added assurance that we would meet our commitments. Our stance was proactive, not reactive. We saw other utilities receiving violations and some-

times fines for failure to meet commitments and didn't want that happening here. We are very pleased with the status of our program, especially in comparison with many in the industry."

England believes that one of the most important gains for the company has been the confidence of the NRC. "They know that when we promise to do something, we're not likely to forget about it."

## NEWS BRIEFS

### Williams presides over council

Lloyd Williams, a GSU section head in Baton Rouge, has been elected president of the Association of Louisiana Utility Councils, Inc. He succeeds Malcolm Bass of South Central Bell in Monroe.

The association was formed in 1977 to promote reduction of damage to underground utilities and to improve communication, coordination and cooperation with the public and the utility industry.

Williams, who has been with Gulf States for nine years, will fill the post until June 1987. Other association officers include Rene Gandolfo of Louisiana Gas Service, Hammond, vice president, and Chuck Roby of Dixie Electric Membership Corp., Denham Springs, treasurer.

Local councils in the association include Baton Rouge, Calcasieu, Livingston, St. Landry, Lafayette, St. Mary, Terrebonne, Shreveport, Ouachita, Bastrop, Leesville-DeRidder, DOTTIE (Baton Rouge), Morehouse, Rayville, Winnsboro and Hammond.

Williams says the local councils are composed of individuals working for public, private and municipal utilities, along with contractors who work with the utilities.



*From left, Jack Worthy accepts the certificate from Anna Mae Bishop and Connie Leigon, a member of the flag committee for the local DAR chapter.*

### DAR chapter honors GSU

Gulf States was honored this summer for its display of the American flag at Edison Plaza by the Col. George Moffett Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR).

The organization presented a certificate of award to Jack Worthy, vice president-general services. One of the DAR members participating in the brief presentation ceremony was Anna Mae Bishop, wife of Brooks Bishop, former senior energy specialist in the Marketing Department and a recent GSU retiree.

The certificate cited Gulf States for "proper use, correct display and patriotic presentation of the flag."

### Wynn earns CID/CED designation

Janice S. Wynn, area development coordinator with GSU in Baton Rouge, has earned the Certified Industrial/Economic Developer designation, announces Ed Collins, president of the American Economic Development Council, which sponsors the program.

The CID/CED designation is the highest professional honor which can be conferred upon an economic or industrial developer. About 390 professionals are currently certified throughout the United States and Canada. There are now 13 Certified Industrial/Economic Developers in the state of Louisiana, with Wynn becoming the first woman to earn the designation.

A 17-year GSU veteran, Wynn earned the CID/CED designation by passing a rigorous written and oral examination that tested knowledge in the field of economic and/or industrial development. A CID/CED candidate must have eight years' experience in economic development to be able to take the test, and must maintain a high degree of continuing education in order to recertify the designation every three years.



# GSU makes a difference



*Lou Ann Glaze (seated) has donated four gallons of blood. Dr. Linn Draper is flanked by (from left) two-gallon donors Mel Cole, Roger Perry, John Hamby and Joe Domino. Another two-gallon donor, Bob Dowies, was unable to be present.*

by Mike Rodgers

"The individual employees at Gulf States are among our most generous contributors," says Jim Colvin, executive director of the Capital Area United Way in Baton Rouge. Colvin's remark reflects a commonly-held attitude among social service agencies about the willingness of GSUers to give both time and money to help others.

Colvin recited a long list of Baton Rouge-area GSU employees who are involved in voluntary United Way activities from office staffing to committee assignments and campaign coordination. His feelings about the contributions of Gulf States employees were echoed by Dick Pontius, executive director of the United Way of Beaumont, who also underscored the efforts on his agency's behalf. "GSU is a major backer of United Way programs every year. We depend on their contributions to continue funding at necessary levels." Like Colvin, he stressed that Gulf States personnel provide leadership at many levels in the annual United Way campaign.

The various blood drives held around the GSU service area annually are another way Gulf States' employees enthusiastically help out. Faye Northcutt, donor recruiter of Lake Charles Memorial Hospital, called GSU "one of the better accounts," adding, "We'd be in a bind without them. The Gulf States' folks in this part of Louisiana are very good about keeping up with their blood plan.

They also help out during emergencies." GSU joined the Blood Center of Southeast Texas in 1976 and since that time has donated 6,700 pints of blood. According to Carol Weatherall, director of donor recruiting for the Blood Center of Southeast Texas, GSU made up 5 percent of the total contributions for 1985, with at least 40 percent of GSU employees in the region donating blood. Pointing to Sabine Station, she emphasizes, "The employees there gave 386 pints of blood. That's a 167 percent contribution. Your Sabine personnel have four blood drives a year and do a lot of work for us."

Every spring, GSUers lace up their walking shoes for the March of Dimes. The money raised in the annual WalkAmerica is targeted for clinics, equipment purchases and research in the fight against birth defects. "In 1986, GSU employees brought in \$14,400," says Rhonda Flanakin, secretary to the division manager of the March of Dimes in Beaumont. "Not only was that the largest contribution, but your company's walkers outnumbered everyone else."

Gulf States started Project Community Assistance Related to Energy (CARE) in March 1983 to provide qualified senior citizens with help in paying their utility bills and for energy-related items such as insulation. Since then, the GSU board of directors has donated \$150,000 to the program,

with employee contributions from Texas and Louisiana accounting for another \$242,000 as of June 1986. Project CARE is administered by social service agencies in Texas and Louisiana. According to Millie Woodel, executive director of the Calcasieu Council on Aging in Lake Charles, 862 households received assistance by the end of the June fiscal year in 1986. "Prior to Project CARE, nothing was done to help these people," she says. "The average person over the age of 60 has an income of \$357 per month. Medical bills average \$73 each month. That leaves about \$71 a week for them to live on. It's almost impossible to pay for food, rent and utilities with that kind of income."

Economic problems in the Port Arthur area have fueled the need for Project CARE assistance there, says James Broussard, executive director of the local Red Cross. "The need is large and getting larger. There is no question that GSU's involvement has been a major factor in getting help to those who need it."

Audrey Wilson, executive director of the Orange chapter of the American Red Cross sees a similar problem in her community. "Because GSU launched Project CARE, we've been able to help those on a fixed income and do it with no administrative costs. You want to know if GSU has made a difference? I say yes, a tremendous difference."



# Wielgus explores marketing strategies

**Editor's note:** Employees interested in reading Wielgus' thesis may call him at extension 733-5776 to obtain a copy.

by Susan Gilley

What marketing strategies should investor-owned utilities adopt when they are in an excess-capacity situation?

Paul Wielgus, senior fuel coordinator, thinks his research for a thesis entitled "Placement and Organization of Marketing Activities Within Investor-Owned Electric Utilities" provides part of the answer. The International Association of Energy Economists (IAEE) apparently thinks so, too, because Wielgus has been invited to present his research findings to the North American meeting of the group at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in November. His findings will also be published and distributed to IAEE members.

Wielgus reveals that he became interested in the topic a couple of years ago when researching a paper on the financial situation facing electric utilities and the strategic planning implications of such circumstances. His thesis was an outgrowth of that paper for an independent study course and helped him satisfy the requirements for a Master's of Business Administration degree from Lamar University a year ago. The finished 90-page typewritten thesis, which took about a year to complete, involved library research and a survey of the top marketing executives at more than 100 United States utilities.

As a result of his extensive research, Wielgus concludes that electric utilities could achieve a better marketing stance if the

major marketing functions were placed in an appropriately designed organizational structure.

As a result of the research and his poll of top marketing executives, Wielgus maintains, "If the environment changes, then the strategy should change, and strategy determines structure." Wielgus acknowledged that the company faces many of the same problems his research uncovered at other utilities. (A summary of an *Electrical World* article on page 19 details some of the problems unique to Gulf Coast utilities.)

Wielgus, who came to Gulf States in 1979, counts at least

one marketing function among his major job responsibilities in the Energy Supply Department — he markets natural gas pipeline services provided by Varibus, a wholly-owned GSU subsidiary.

Other job responsibilities include arranging coal supply and oil supply for company power plants, as well as lining up gas supply for the Baton Rouge Gas Department.

In addition to his MBA, Wielgus holds a bachelor's degree in economics and a master's degree in mineral and energy resources, both from West Virginia University.



Paul Wielgus





*Frank Canella says he has suited up for the job in all kinds of weather conditions.*

## Job offers variety

by Susan Gilley

**R**ugged blue jeans, a casual shirt and an LSU Tigers cap make up Frank Canella's work wardrobe — at least until the job demands the hard hat, protective sleeves and gloves and other safety items that complete his attire.

An outdoorsman, Canella says his work as a lineman-1st class in Baton Rouge is to his liking. "I just like doing that kind of work. You have challenges everyday in the line department. You never do the same thing two days in a row."

Challenge is nothing new to Canella, who weathered one of the biggest storms of his life about three years ago, with the

premature birth of his son, Frank Jr.

Weighing only 3 pounds, 6 ounces when he was born, little Frank's weight dropped to 2 pounds, 15 ounces shortly afterward. Canella admits that it was a rough time, but one that drew him closer to his wife, Sylvia, and their little son. Now a healthy, happy 3-year-old, little Frank does not even resemble the ailing infant he once was.

The couple is now expecting their second child sometime next spring, and Canella says he is not wasting his energy speculating about the child's sex. "I only hope it's healthy," he explains.

Although Canella told *Plain Talks* about his family's experience, he adds that his philosophy of work may be summed up by "not

taking my work home and not bringing home to work."

Before he came to work for GSU in February 1978, Canella worked for his father in a grocery store. As a result, he reveals, "I'm not one of those eight-hour people" who just think about putting in their eight hours, then leaving. "If a job needs to be done, I want to finish it."

Now 27, Canella says he frequently finds himself in the position of a company spokesman among his family, friends and customers. "Sometimes it kind of bothers me, because I feel that customers try to put words in my mouth."

Even so, he says, "I love my job and I tell everybody that GSU needs the money (from increased rates), because I think we do need it."



# Sideliners gather at Lakeshore

Photos by Susan Gilley

About 220 GSU retirees and their guests attended the system-wide Sideliners' meeting at the Lakeshore Club near Lake Arthur in August.

Features of the day-long session

included bingo, a catfish luncheon and speeches by Summa Stelly and Tommy Powell, District IV commissioner with the Louisiana Public Service Commission. Stelly updated the retirees on the problems facing the company, providing historical insights into how they developed.



Tommy Powell



Baton Rouge Division Sideliners

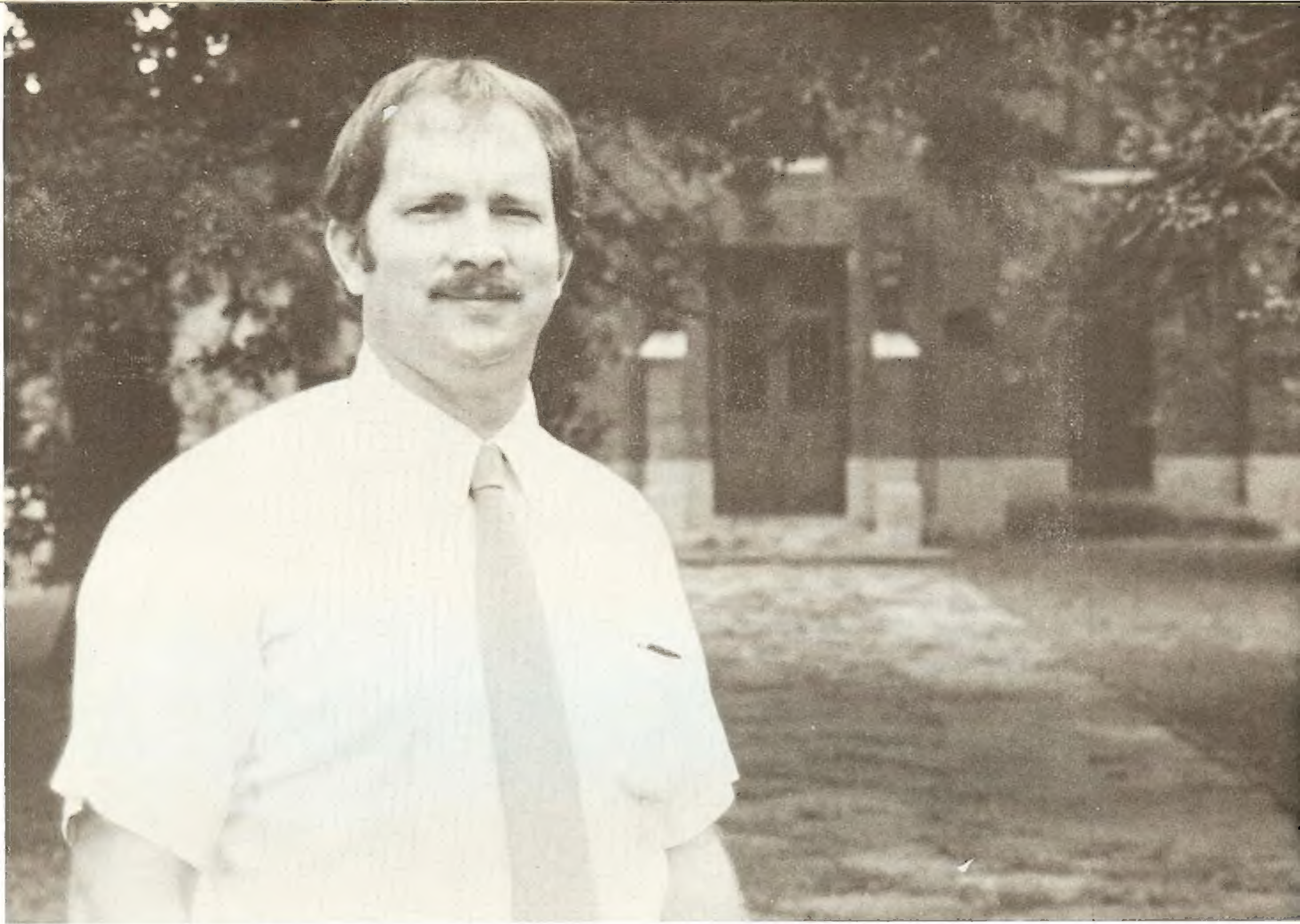


Beaumont Division Sideliners



Port Arthur Division Sideliners





## *In Calvert District:* **'Everybody takes care**

by Robert Adams

**A**t the far northwest corner of Gulf States' service area lies the Calvert district. The district, covering five counties, claims one of the most outstanding safety records in the company. Records indicate that in its history, the Calvert district has never been charged with a lost time accident.

Calvert is an agricultural district, with cotton, cattle and watermelons being some of the produce. This historical community can boast that it once had the largest cotton gin in the world.

Seven employees serve the 3,700 district customers. Paul Senkel, superintendent — Calvert, came here in 1985. He is happy the district has such a good safety

record and plans for it to continue.

David Martin, utility foreman — line, says, "We don't take safety for granted — our employees are knowledgeable about their jobs and the importance of safety."

In weekly safety meetings, employees discuss safety rule changes and safety bulletins and review other publications like the *Standard Services Practices* manual. Martin says they also note any changes in transmission lines that may affect their work.

Sometimes when there is an unusual amount of work, employees may have a tendency to speed up to try to finish. Billy Skorupinsky, lineman-1st class, says Calvert employees have such a good safety record because they still take enough time to follow safe work

practices in these situations.

Leroy Butler, serviceman-1st class who retired in July, had worked in the district since the late '50s. He feels that the Calvert district has "a pretty good bunch of people. They practice safety and work as a team."

Butler did have a couple of stories about mishaps on the job. There was the time an employee fell through a rotten porch, but was unhurt. Another employee, back in the days when GSU marketed appliances, slipped on a biscuit while working on a stove. He was also unhurt.

Butler is proud of Calvert's safety record. He expressed regret that in 1975 a tornado destroyed the two rows of safety plaques the district had received.





*At left, District Superintendent Paul Senkel explains that construction of the Calvert Courthouse began in 1875 since the town was to serve as county seat of Robertson County. Before the courthouse was completed in 1879, however, the county seat was moved to the nearby township of Franklin.*



*Ray Smith, meter reader, uses an electronic meter-reading device in his daily rounds.*

*Above, Bill Johnson, serviceman-1st class, readies his gear for a day's work.*

## of everybody else'

Bill Johnson, serviceman-1st class, says that Calvert's safety record is good because "everybody takes care of everybody else."

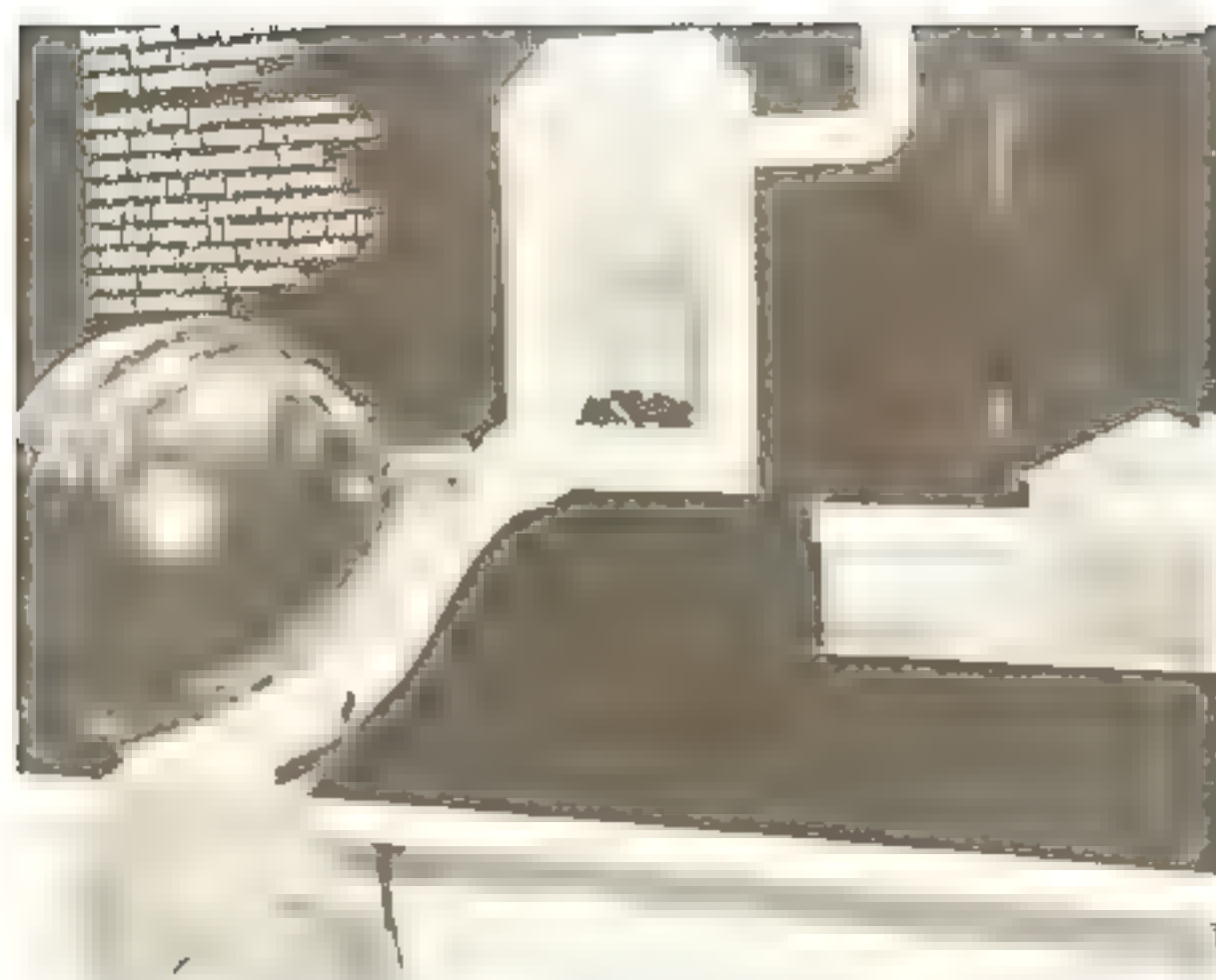
Ray Smith, meter reader, agrees that one of the best ways to work safely is to practice safety and work as a team, to look out for the other fellow.

The seven employees of the Calvert district have a big job. Senkel says the employees are taught and understand that no job is so urgent that it cannot be performed safely. Working together as a team and continuing to follow safe work practices should help them maintain their outstanding record.

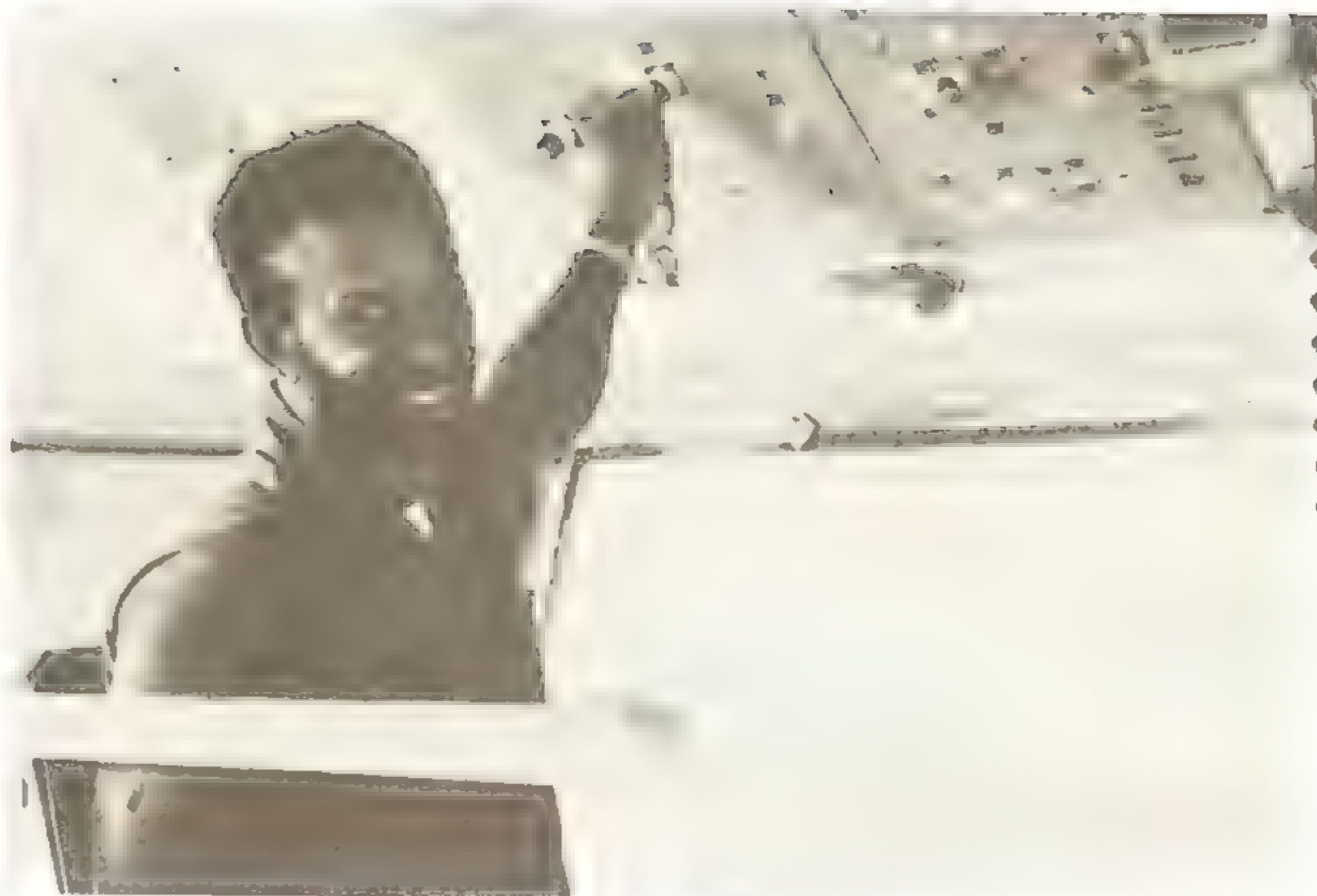


*Taking the time to do a job right is a key to safety, says Billy Skorupinsky, lineman-1st class (left). David Martin, utility foreman-line, shares that attitude.*





*The youngest visitors to the Nelson Coal Energy Center (above) enjoy the displays. Older children and adults prefer the rotary coal dumper part of their tour, where the huge machinery is operated by Willie Batiste (at right) and other fuel handling operators.*



## Nelson Coal Energy Center educates visitors

by Susan Gilley

"It's not at all unusual for someone to tell us they thought that fuel adjustment was a credit resulting from cheaper gasoline prices for GSU vehicles," reveals Margaret Monk Harris, the consumer information coordinator who leads tours through the Nelson Coal Energy Center.

Clearing up such misconceptions is one benefit of providing the center for tours by schoolchildren and adults, notes Harris. Although coal is highlighted as one fuel to generate electricity, the center focuses on educating the public about the overall picture of producing electricity for customers. Located on the second floor of the Nelson Coal administration building, the center features a lecture room and an exhibit room with a couple of hands-on displays.

"I begin a typical tour with a 15-minute slide program that reveals how Nelson Coal affects the environment and the local economy. It also includes a brief history of GSU and talks about different fuels for generating electricity," explains Harris.

Visitors then view exhibits ranging from an oversized map of the Gulf States' service area, to a cutaway dollhouse demonstrating energy efficiency measures, to a computer game to test elec-

tricity knowledge and a bicycle that can be pedaled to provide power for several light bulbs, a small television set and a small electric fan.

One special effects display flashes lightning to help illustrate the history of electricity. Another shows the coal fuel cycle, beginning with surface-mining the low-sulphur, sub-bituminous Wyoming coal used at Nelson and continuing through to its arrival at the plant.

"We tell visitors that coal is not burned in large chunks, but is crushed and pulverized first," Harris adds. They also learn that the coal byproducts — fly ash and bottom ash — may be put to practical use, too. Nelson Coal has a contract with Houston-based Ash Management Systems which buys the ash for resale as a road stabilizer, road construction material and driveway material. The plant itself makes practical use of fly ash by using it to keep stockpiled coal from being eroded by the wind and rain. When the fly ash is dampened, it approaches the consistency of concrete. The fly ash is simply broken away when the coal is needed.

Harris stays quite busy throughout the school year with this particular part of her job. The tours accelerate from March to May, when science textbooks often

feature the electricity units.

Formal tours are provided for the fourth grade through adults. Fourth- through seventh-graders are permitted to take bus tours of the plant grounds after completing the center activities, while eighth-graders and up may visit the control room and the laboratory and view the rotary coal car dumper in operation.

Harris likes to use questions to get her younger visitors to start thinking, but she admits that the group with the most questions for her is the 10- through 12-year-old age group. The younger visitors are especially intrigued with the stationary bicycle ride, while the older ones are more impressed with the rotary car dumper. "It's really something to see the dumper flip an entire rail car and pour out its load of coal in a little more than two minutes," Harris concedes.

The tours may pose a challenge for Harris, who must sometimes help corral a group of 30 or so fifth-graders on a schoolbus on a slow drive around what is often a blazingly-hot route.

But Harris is firmly convinced that the results are well worth the effort. "They (the visitors) come away with a good idea of what is required to produce electricity. Some end up saying they're surprised that electricity doesn't cost more than it does!"



## In Edison Museum:

# Street seeks creativity

by Mike Rodgers

Jill Street appreciates creativity and genuinely likes meeting people; she believes that her new job as curator of the Edison Plaza Museum is the perfect place for someone with that attitude.

In assuming the responsibility of the museum, Street says that drawing on her background will help her meet the challenge. She holds a master's degree in music and has earned many credits toward a doctorate. "Music is a very creative way of expression," she says, adding, "Just as music must be fresh and interesting to keep the attention of listeners, a museum should offer a fresh perspective to visitors. I hope to bring a new creative touch."

Street sees her most immediate task as one of shaping the information to suit the various groups which tour the museum. "We have people of all ages and backgrounds come through here," she states. In her view, the success of the Edison Museum is gauged not only by the number of tours, but by the number of people, especially students, who make return visits to learn more. "I don't always say the same thing every time. Sometimes I might place more emphasis on one exhibit than another."

The most popular exhibits on display are the phonographs and light bulbs, two of Edison's most famous inventions. Also of particular interest is the information on alternative energy sources and a catalogue of all 1,093 of his inventions, an amount which surprises most people.

Being curator of the museum involves more than scheduling and conducting tours. New artifacts donated to the museum must be properly accounted for and arrangements made for their eventual display. "Not only does the facility house the largest collection of Edison memorabilia west of the Mississippi River, it is also the



*Jill Street explains the evolution of the light bulb, one of Thomas Edison's most famous inventions, to a visiting group of Japanese students.*

only electric industry museum in the South," emphasizes Street. "We have a story to tell about the importance of electricity to our lives as well."

The path that led Street to Gulf States had little to do with Thomas Edison or museums. It began instead with a yearning to play the piano, either as a music teacher or as a concert pianist. She has twice been named one of the Outstanding Women of America and her biography is listed in the *International Who's Who of Musicians*, published in Cambridge, England. However, her music career took an unexpected turn. "I found out that the world of a concert pianist wasn't for me," she says. Noting her need to be around others, she adds, "People treat pianists as performers rather than as ordinary people. I felt isolated and knew that I needed to look for something else."

Street decided that business offered her both the chance for a second career option and the opportunity to sharpen her verbal skills. "My dad worked for GSU

for 22 years, so I felt as though I had been around utilities all my life," she points out. Joining GSU in Baton Rouge in 1978, she was a departmental clerk in accounting and a consumer service representative. In 1984, she moved to Beaumont as a departmental clerk in system engineering design to be near her parents, who live in Jasper.

A look at Street's résumé reveals experience in both part-time and full-time teaching on the university level. That background, she believes, is also an asset in her new job. "What we do here in the museum essentially is to teach people about Thomas Edison and his enormous contributions," says Street.

Looking to the future, Street hopes to see some of the exhibits expanded so that visitors will be able to contrast the sophisticated utility industry equipment used today with that used in years past. She is also excited about the prospect of meeting new people. "This is the type of job I always aimed for, the place I was meant to be."





Brad Olinde

Photo by Greg Russell



Timothy Harland

Photo by Audrey McDonald



Kenneth Bridgers Jr.

Photo by Cheryl Crawford

**Editor's note:** Contributing photographs and/or interviews for this article were Cheryl Crawford, Debi Patin, Greg Russell and Audrey McDonald.

by Susan Gilley

Over the past few months, River Bend and other GSU-related topics have popped up at parties, in the grocery store and just about anywhere Gulf Staters may go when they're not at work.

Some employees may choose to remain quiet while the company is being discussed, but more seem to be deciding to speak up for GSU.

*Plain Talks* interviewed five employees at different locations who seized opportunities to explain Gulf States' situation. They explained why they decided to speak up and how those who listened reacted.

Two employees — Bradley Olinde of Willow Glen and Kenneth R. Bridgers Jr. of Nelson Coal — chose to speak up at formal gatherings of GSU customers.

On a work holiday — Presidents' Day — Olinde went to a public meeting sponsored by Louisiana Public Service Commissioner Louis Lambert. "I wasn't really planning on getting up and saying anything," recalls Olinde, a test technician-1st class, "but after I sat and listened for a

while to what was going on, I just got tired of what was being said." He was especially concerned about complaints that River Bend Station represented "overbuilding" by the company. He finally stood up and said to Lambert, "Our system load was around 5,000 megawatts when they (the federal government) told us we couldn't keep using gas to make electricity. I asked him, 'How can we replace 5,000 megawatts with a 940-megawatt unit like the one at River Bend? That's not over building.' Lambert started talking about who made the Fuel Use Act, but he did a good job of avoiding my question."

Olinde asserts that he came away from the meeting "feeling good about what I had said." He believes that it is important for employees to take the time to explain the GSU story, but he concedes that it is difficult to change people's minds about an issue, especially "when you have a public figure like Louis Lambert on the other side."

Olinde adds, "The bottom line is that people just hate to see their electricity bills go up. They're completely blind to any long-term implications of holding down electricity costs. They think electricity ought to stay the same price, even though our costs to operate aren't going down."

Olinde is more familiar than

most employees with the economic effects of falling oil prices. He joined GSU three years ago after being laid off from a job in the oil industry. "I was one of the first ones to feel the impact of falling oil prices," he notes.

In Lake Charles, Bridgers attended a similar meeting hosted by District IV LPSC Commissioner Tommy Powell in mid-July.

"I told the commissioners that all I ever heard was complaints about high electric bills and never once did I hear the word 'service.'" That bothered Bridgers, a mechanic helper, who points out, "I feel that GSU employees go that extra mile to provide dependable service, and that is especially obvious during hurricanes and other inclement weather."

But Bridgers says he may have an advantage over some GSU employees. "It is easy for me to speak up for GSU because I was raised in a GSU family. My dad (Kenneth R. Bridgers Sr. of Sabine Station) has worked for GSU 34 years."

Two other outspoken employees have that same advantage. They are Timothy Harland, district substation operator in Orange, and Terri S. Carley, consumer service representative in Baton Rouge.

Harland's father is Bill Harland, who recently retired as a right-

## Speaking up





Jodie Coco



Terry Carley

Photo by Debi Patin

## for Gulf States

of-way agent with 29 years of GSU service. When the younger Harland visited Astro World recently, he bought a wooden plaque decorated with the words "Proud GSUer." He displays the plaque in his living room.

"I speak up every chance that I get, because I think we're getting a bum deal from some of the media. My neighbor was asking me about why we built River Bend and I told him that at the time, Gulf States was being forced away from the fuels we were using. I explained that we were forced to diversify to coal or nuclear and we decided to do both. He responded positively once he understood that our actions resulted from a law. Before, he just thought it was an impulse decision on the part of GSU."

According to Harland, "Once people get the facts about a problem, they're pretty understanding."

In Baton Rouge, Carley finds plenty of opportunities to explain her feelings about GSU to others. Her father is Donald Strickland, a planning supervisor at Willow Glen with 29 years of service.

"I tell people that I really feel that GSU tries hard to be fair to customers. I've seen GSUers go out of their way — even give customers the benefit of the doubt — in the effort to be fair."

Carley finds that she gets the

most questions from relatives outside the immediate family circle. "They want to know 'why's this on my bill' and 'what about River Bend,'" she reveals. "I was at a party the other day and some people were talking about how they thought River Bend was a mistake. I told them that, yes, River Bend was the second most expensive plant ever built, but that it was also the last one completed. A guy said, 'You've really got a point there.'"

She advises other employees, "No way should you sit back and just listen. I don't have all the answers, but once customers see that we're willing to listen to their point of view — once they see that we're not just out to rip them off — then they can say, 'Alright, I can see that you're right' about a particular point."

In Beaumont, Jodie Coco, a departmental clerk in Engineering Design, took pen in hand to respond to a letter to the editor of the local paper. She felt that so-called facts mentioned in the letter were off the mark and she collected facts to counter the erroneous information.

"I've spoken up before," Coco says. "When people complain to me about how much their light bills have gone up, I ask them how much their property tax bill has gone up. Usually, it's a whole lot more."

Coco looks for opportunities to

share GSU's story. "Once, I called to order flowers and the woman taking my order was lamenting the closing of a Beaumont discount department store and the 75-100 jobs that would be lost as a result." The six-year GSU employee agreed with the woman that the loss would be bad for the area economy, then added, "And wouldn't it be bad if GSU had to go bankrupt and 5,000 of us lost our jobs." Even though that is highly unlikely to happen, Coco uses the example as a worst-case scenario to get non-GSUers to thinking about the contribution Gulf States makes to the communities it serves.

Coco believes that many people are simply confused about some of the technical explanations surrounding GSU's predicament. "I try to bring it to their level. I tell them that I'm not thrilled about paying such cheap prices at the gas pump because I have friends and relatives who have lost jobs in the oil business. I would rather pay a little more if they would have jobs as a result," she notes.

Unfortunately, Coco finds that people often find it hard to make that same connection for GSU. Even so, Coco says she will not give up her fight to tell the story, adding, "I want to point out the facts."



## Creel caps 36-year GSU career

The GSU office in Silsbee was crowded with friends, relatives and co-workers eager to give their best wishes to Billy Creel, senior district service representative. Creel ended his 36 years with Gulf States April 30. Close friends, aware of Creel's enthusiasm for his woodworking hobby, presented him with assorted woodworking tools.



Billy Creel (left) and Robert Sheffield, district superintendent.

## Richardson retires after 39 years

Orie S. Richardson, master electrician at Neches Station, told his co-workers goodbye June 1 after 39 years with GSU. At a retirement party in his honor, friends presented Richardson with a plaque and other gifts.



From left, Jim Rose, Orie S. Richardson and Jimmie Smith, plant superintendent-Neches Station.



From left, Demas Martin, Floyd Doughty and Clarence Patin.

## Retirees feted at crawfish boil

Three Baton Rouge Division employees retired from the company in classic Louisiana style May 20, with a crawfish boil in their honor. Friends in the Electric Service Department honored Floyd Doughty, department head; Demas Martin, helper; and Clarence Patin, helper. Each retiree received a plaque.



Saxon (left) and Jim Fernandez, supervisor-marketing.

## Saxon retires in Port Arthur

When Jack Saxon, senior marketing representative in Port Arthur, left his retirement party, he carried along a rod and reel, a membership in the SPARC Club, a canister of candy and a card full of well-wishes and money. Saxon is a 33-year veteran of GSU.

## Retiree bids musical farewell

Serving as the guest of honor didn't stop Johnny A. Prejean from playing the guitar and singing at his own retirement party May 9 in Gonzales, reports *Plain Talks* correspondent Charlotte Gautreau. Prejean, a serviceman-1st class, retired after 34 years with Gulf States.

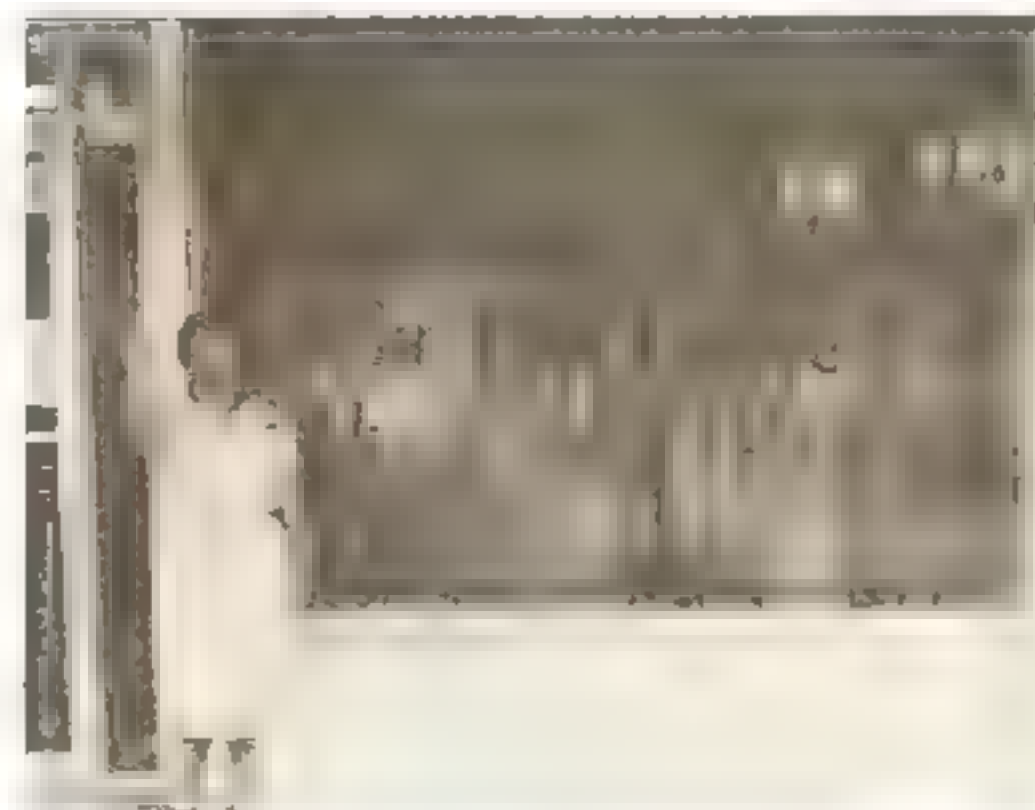
The gifts presented to Prejean and his wife Robbie included an outdoor boiling pot, frying pan, several ice chests and cash. The Prejeans have eight children and nine grandchildren.



Johnny Prejean on the guitar.

## Friends "advertise" Cunningham retirement

When Helen Cunningham, local office clerk in Sour Lake, retired, she was surprised to discover that co-workers commemorated her 43 years of service by painting the office windows to note the occasion. Cunningham retired May 1.



Helen Cunningham



## New arrivals



**Name:** Megan Rochelle Scott  
**Born:** May 7  
**Parents:** Dennis and Annette (customer contact clerk, Baton Rouge) Scott



**Name:** Ryan Scot Andrus  
**Born:** Feb. 25  
**Parents:** Scot (repairman-1st class, Nelson Gas & Oil) and Debbie Andrus



**Name:** LaShantra Lashae Henderson  
**Born:** June 18  
**Parents:** Ernest (meter reader, Navasota) and Georgia Henderson



**Name:** Kaitlyn Denise Van Hees  
**Born:** Jan. 27  
**Parents:** Dennis (district service representative, Navasota) and Peggy Van Hees



**Name:** Aaron Keith Little  
**Born:** Jan. 28  
**Grandparents:** Wayne (store-room foreman, Beaumont) and Brenda (electrician-1st class, Sabine Station) Broussard



**Name:** Callie Elizabeth Creel  
**Born:** July 4  
**Parents:** Gary (utility worker II, Sabine Station) and Wendy Creel



**Name:** Brett Ashley Goodwin  
**Birth:** April 4  
**Parents:** Greg (repairman-1st class, Nelson Coal) and Teri Goodwin



**Name:** Lucas Granville Thurston  
**Born:** July 28  
**Parents:** Larry and Karen (meter reader, Orange) Thurston



**Name:** Samuel Elliott Brocato  
**Born:** March 24  
**Parents:** Benny and Sheryl (environmental analyst, Beaumont) Brocato



**Name:** Austyn Marie Evans  
**Born:** June 26  
**Parents:** Donald and Donna (senior clerk, Orange) Evans



**Name:** Brad Timothy Elrod  
**Born:** June 1  
**Grandparents:** Mr. and Mrs. David (line foreman, Woodville) Pate Jr.



*Amy Smith*

## Teen competes at state level

Amy Smith, 14-year-old daughter of Robert and Mary Smith of Vidor, competed in

the 1986 Texas Miss Teen Pageant in Dallas Aug. 29-31.

Although the Vidor High School freshman did not win the state pageant, her dad, a senior engineering assistant in Beaumont, reports that she "had a great time and had some favorable comments from one of the judges about her singing."

To qualify for the pageant, contestants must maintain at least a "B" average. They also must participate in the Volunteer Service Program of the pageant. Amy's volunteer work was as a candy striper at Baptist Hospital in Beaumont.

Contestants are judged on scholastic achievement, volunteer service, speech or talent, personal interview and formal presentation.

Among Amy's accomplishments and activities are National Junior Honor Society, Concert Choir, Student Council, Brigades and All-American Academic Award.



*Randall Hetzel*

## Hetzel becomes Eagle Scout

Randall Hetzel, son of Neches Station employee Albert A. Hetzel Sr., was awarded the rank of Eagle Scout in a Court of Honor on Aug. 6. To earn the rank, young Hetzel led a book and magazine drive for Vidor area rest homes.

A sophomore at Vidor High School, Randall is the elder Hetzel's second son to receive the honor. His dad, a repairman-1st class, has been with GSU since 1968.



# Making GSU work

**Editor's note:** The following essay was written by Donna Bush, energy auditor in Baton Rouge. It is reproduced with her permission:

by Donna Bush

What makes GSU work? Not just one group. It takes many dedicated people to offer our communities the service they receive. We at GSU think of ourselves as a "body" dedicated to providing the energy needed for our service area. Individually, GSU employees are just ordinary good citizens, working to support their families and their states.

Collectively, GSU employees make up a body of strength and service, with each person being an important part of a whole. We are the Energy People.

The blood for this body flows from the power plants where workers produce the energy needed from gas, coal or nuclear fuel. The ears are represented by the switchboard operators, secretaries and accounting clerks who listen to the requests of customers.

The hands of this body are provided by the linemen and construction crews of both electric and gas service, who have the know-how to get the juice to the homes.

The feet of this body are the meter readers, daily collecting consumption data.

The eyes of this body are represented by the accounting departments and the management, seeing to it that mistakes are few and quickly keeping track of daily business.

The mouth of this body is busy relating updated information to aid our customers, the news media and GSU employees, through the Public Affairs Department, Consumer Services programs and Employee Communications.

The heart is kept beating by the Marketing Department, selling our product to increase our revenue. Without business, the whole body dies.

Feelings for this body are strong and openly displayed by all employees on a daily basis and through customer service and community involvement in Project Care, United Way, March of Dimes and various volunteer works, throughout the year.

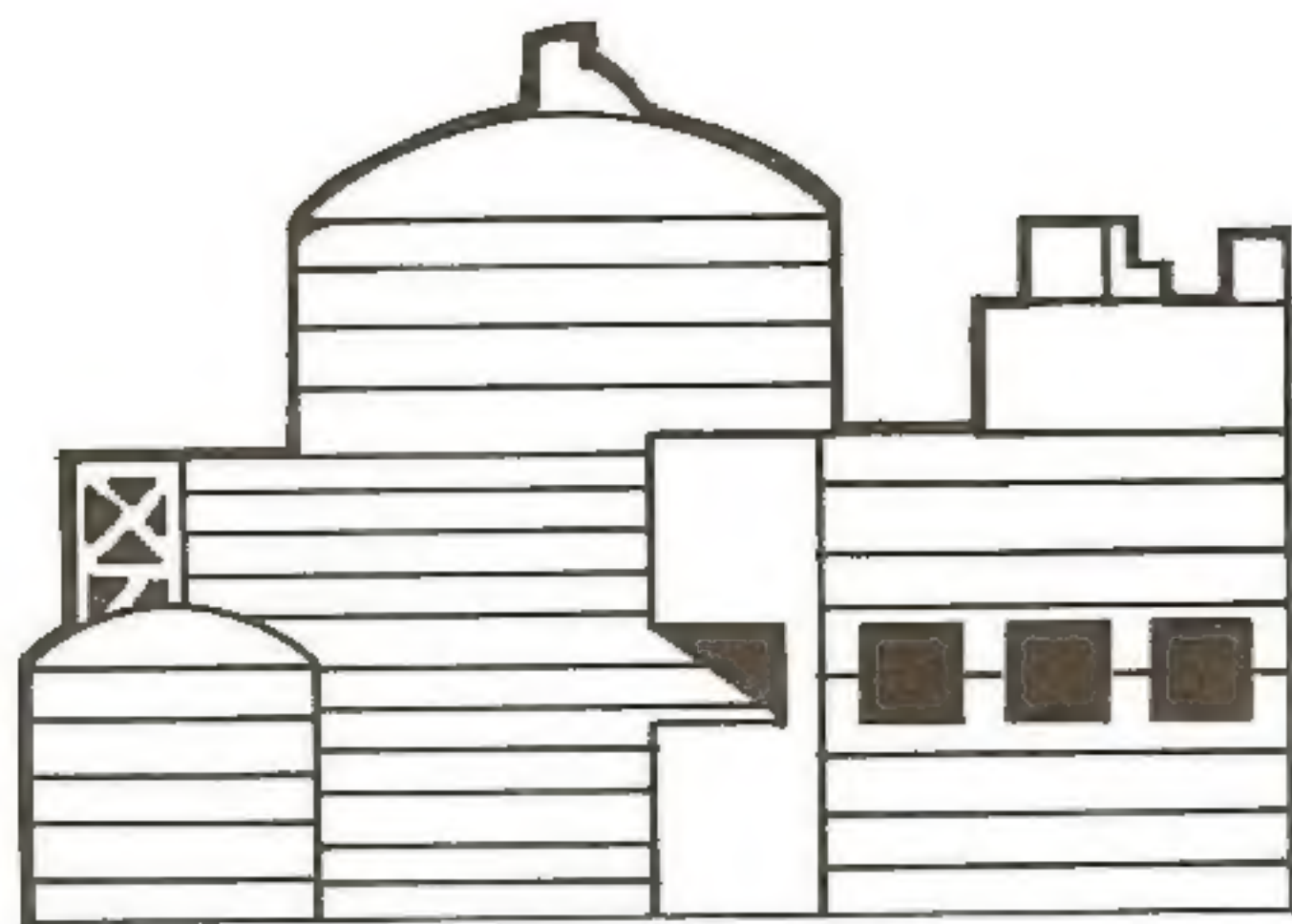
A body stays alive only as long as its brain is in action or it becomes brain-dead. The brain of this body is represented by the corporate leaders, the decision-makers, upon whom the whole body depends for its successful life.

Of course, we must not forget the all-important soul within this body. The soul is represented by our total spirit, our positive attitudes, our love of mankind and dedication to service. To keep the soul alive, we must keep up morale. It's every part of the body functioning together that makes GSU work.



Donna Bush





# Article highlights utility ills

**Editor's note:** A report featured in the July 1986 issue of *Electrical World* investigated what it termed "the utility crisis on the Gulf Coast." What were the findings? The study, conducted by Dames & Moore Inc., concluded that Gulf Coast utilities, including GSU, have indeed been prudent in their business dealings. It also identified the factors that led to such problems. The magazine is available in the Corporate Library, Edison Plaza, 10th floor, for those who wish to read the entire article. Following is a summary of the main points of the article.

— Gulf Coast utilities contributed to the Sun Belt economic boom of the late 1960s and early 1970s because of their low operating costs and favorable industrial rates.

— From the 1950s, electric utilities in the area took advantage of plentiful, cheap natural gas supplies.

— To protect their favorable rates, these utilities negotiated long-term natural gas contracts.

— Construction and expansion of refineries and petrochemical plants flourished in the area.

— As interstate pipelines were built to serve residential and industrial customers in the Midwest and Northeast and as electric utilities increased their use of natural gas, competition arose for gas resources.

— The nation adopted a natural gas policy featuring two principles: that gas prices were to be controlled at the wellhead, as well as further down the distribution

network, and that gas should be considered a premium fuel for which unrestricted boiler fuel was not the best use.

— Electric utility executives responded to competition for dwindling gas supplies by deciding to develop new baseload capacity using either coal or nuclear.

— Utilities weighed the higher capital costs of nuclear against the ever-more-stringent coal emission control technologies. They also considered trends toward deregulation of coal freight rates and the apparently stable capital costs and interest expenses. Current federal policy also seemed to make new coal generation less attractive, while signaling continued support for the commercial nuclear power program. As a result, the region chose nuclear with some coal to replace much of their gas-fired baseload capacity.

— The report stated, "Between 1967 and 1974, 16,300 megawatts of coal and nuclear capacity additions were announced within Middle South Utilities, Gulf States Utilities and Houston Lighting and Power Co. — all prudent decisions, because the protection of the electricity supplies and prices for the massive industrial complex was essential. Typically, for the Gulf Coast region, up to 50 percent of kilowatthour sales were to industry. Of that, 24 percent went to chemical plants and 10 percent to refineries."

— The most significant event of the 1970s was the 1979 Three Mile Island accident, which resulted in continually-changing regulatory requirements.

— Before that, however, the building of nuclear and coal plants in the region coincided with the rampant inflation brought about by the guns and butter policy of the Vietnam War. This inflation also brought about

higher interest rates.

— Other factors impacting Gulf Coast utilities included the Arab oil embargo of 1974; the Clean Air Act amendments of 1973 and 1977, which adversely affected the capital and operating costs of new coal generation; and a Federal Energy Administration order in 1974, which prohibited certain existing plants from burning natural gas or oil as their primary energy source.

— Further, the Power Plant and Industrial Fuel Use Act in 1978 forbade all utility power plants from burning natural gas as their primary fuel source after 1990, and prohibited the use of natural gas or petroleum in all new plants. The first restriction was repealed in 1981, but the second remains in effect.

— The trend toward cogeneration was given a boost with passage of the Public Utility Regulatory Policy Act (PURPA) of 1978, which required utilities to purchase excess electricity from industries. Previously, many of these industries had been customers rather than suppliers.

— According to the report, the Gulf Coast utility crisis might be alleviated by any one of three actions. If government borrowing could be reduced, lower interest rates might ease the capital-cost recovery burdens of new nuclear plants, including River Bend Station. If acid rain legislation requires additional emission reductions of the emitters only, then the Gulf Coast coal burners might once again benefit from regional industrial rate differentials since high-sulfur emissions are minimal in the region. If current gas and oil market predictions of high supply/low prices prove wrong, then the decision to abandon gas-fired baseload generation will be considered a good one.



# PLAIN TALKS

P. O. Box 2951  
Beaumont, Texas 77704

Address Correction Requested

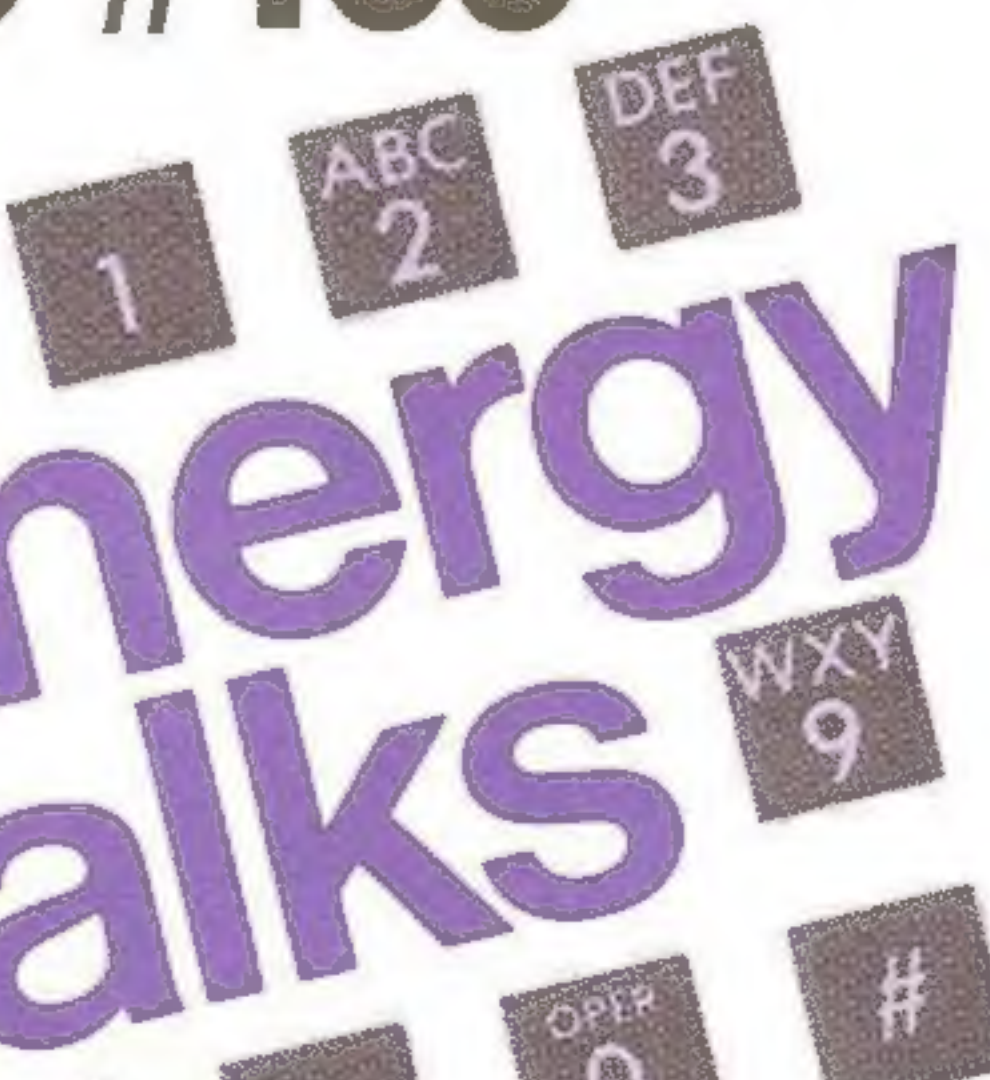
BULK RATE  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Beaumont, Texas  
Permit No. 11



## MOBILE HOMEWORK

You can make your mobile home more efficient through placement, planting and proper air systems. Find out more.

**1-800-231-3080**  
**tape #188**

Call   
**energy**  
**talks**

**GULF STATES  
UTILITIES CO.**  
Energy is everybody's business.